

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7693

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

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DAKAR AND RABAT FOR DAO

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, SOPN, AG, SS, FR, EG

SUBJ: SAHARA: FRENCH HOSTAGES AND MILITARY OPERATIONS

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WHO VISITED TINDOUF REGION ON OCCASION OF "TRANSFER" OF FRENCH HOSTAGES FROM POLISARIO GUERRILLAS TO SAHRAOUI REPUBLIC MINISTRY OF INFORMATION MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. IN MORE OR LESS PRIVATE CONVERSATION, HOSTAGES WERE AS HOSTILE TO GOF AS THEY HAD BEEN IN INTERVIEWS WITH ALGERIAN JOURNALISTS. ONE SAID THAT FRANCE HAD LET HOSTAGES DOWN AND THAT THEY FELT NO SENSE OF GRATITUDE TOWARDS GOF.

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B. HOSTAGES APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN WELL FED AND CARED FOR DURING THEIR CAPTIVITY.

C. DURING THEIR NEARLY SEVEN MONTHS IN POLISARIO HANDS, HOSTAGES WERE KEPT IN TENTS IN DESERT. THEY CHANGED CAMPS THREE TIMES DURING THEIR CAPTIVITY. ALTHOUGH THEY PROFESSED TO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT WHERE CAMPS HAD BEEN LOCATED, ONE HOSTAGE INDICATED PRIVATELY THAT HE WOULD HAVE MORE TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT IN PARIS.

D. NINE MAURITANIAN PRISONERS INTERVIEWED BY JOURNALISTS APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY BURNED. NONE OF JOURNALISTS EXPERT ENOUGH TO BE CERTAIN THAT BURNS CAUSED BY NAPALM OR PHOSPHOROUS. MAURITANIANS DESCRIPTIONS OF ATTACK NOT ENTIRELY COHERENT. JOURNALISTS CONFIRMED THAT, AS NOTED IN ALGERIAN PRESS, MAURITANIANS VERY YOUTHFUL.

2. JOURNALISTS' CONCLUSION IS THAT FRENCH AVIATION DID IN FACT PARTICIPATE IN ATTACKS. TO SUPPORT THIS ASSERTION, THEY POINT OUT THAT GOF HAD BEEN DENYING INVOLVEMENT UNTIL DEC 12-15 OPERATION BUT THAT SINCE THAT TIME FRENCH GOVT HAS REFUSED TO COMMENT ON REPORTS OF FRENCH ARMED FORCES PARTICIPATION. JOURNALISTS STRUCK BY FRENCH REFUSAL TO COMMENT ON REPORT THAT A JAGUAR AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN HIT BY GROUND FIRE, AND PERHAPS DOWNED, DURING BATTLE ALLEGED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE FOLLOWING RECENT POLISARIO ATTACK ON MAURITANIAN GARRISON AT TMEIMICHATT, 40 KILOMETERS FROM TICHLA.

3. IN ADDITION TO CHARGES OF FRENCH AND SPANISH AID TO POLISARIO, ALGERIAN MEDIA NOW CHARGING EGYPTIAN INVOLVEMENT AS WELL. "EVIDENCE" PRESENTED TO SUPPORT THIS ASSERTION WAS PHOTOGRAPH OF METALLIC DISC WITH MARKED WITH ARABIC NUMBERS. THIS ITEM EVIDENTLY CONSIDERED SOME SORT OF ARMAMENT.HAYNES

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